

Administration of Barack Obama, 2015

Remarks Prior to a Cabinet Meeting

May 21, 2015

Well, today I have the opportunity to welcome two of the newest members of our Cabinet who haven't had a chance to be at a Cabinet meeting before: our new Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter, and our new Attorney General, Loretta Lynch. And we want to give them a big round of applause.

Each of the men and women around this table have a very simple mission, although it's hard to execute, and that is, how do we make sure that we are continually expanding opportunity, prosperity, and security for the American people? The good news is, about halfway through 2015, we've already seen some significant progress. The unemployment rate is now at its lowest in almost 7 years. Our businesses created 3 million jobs over the past 12 months, nearly the fastest pace in over a decade. On the health care front, the uninsured rate has now fallen by the largest amount in four decades, even as health care inflation continues to be lower than it has been in a very long time.

So our work is paying off. But we've got to build on that progress. And our overarching goal remains the same, which is, how do we make sure everybody in this country gets opportunity? That means that we're going to keep fighting to make sure that community colleges are as free and as universal as high school. It means we're going to go after issues of poverty and inequality, both urban and rural. It means that we're going to continue to expand on our job training agenda and our apprenticeship agenda so that people of all ages have the skills that they need to succeed in this economy.

It means we're going to continue to go after ISIL, get a strong deal that prevents Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. And as part of our agenda for middle class economics, it means that we're going to continue to pursue strong trade agreements that benefit American workers and American businesses.

And I want to thank the bipartisan group of Senators who took a big step forward this morning on the trade agenda that is consistent with strong labor standards, strong environmental standards, and is going to open up access to markets that too often are closed even as these other countries are selling goods here in the United States. It's an agenda that's good for U.S. businesses, but most importantly, good for American workers.

So we've got a lot to do over the next year and a half. We're going to run through the tape. *[Laughter]* And I'm going to be hearing from everybody around this table in terms of how we are going to make sure that all of our agencies are working on all cylinders to accomplish these goals. All right?

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:21 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

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